3.0 HISTORIC CONTEXTS

3.1 Introduction

Southern Sussex County, Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred, and portions of the APE for historic architectural resources and the surrounding region have been the subject of numerous cultural resource investigations. The historic contexts produced below rely heavily on those earlier reports. These include the *Historic Context and Master Reference and Summary* (Herman *et al.* 1989); *Rehoboth Beach Area Improvements Project: Sussex County, Delaware, Baseline Cultural Resources Investigation* (Harris *et al.* 2005); *Rehoboth Beach Entrance Improvement Project, Sussex County, Delaware: Historic Architectural Investigation Phase 1 Study Area* (Clark *et al.* 2005); *Draft Historic Structures Survey/Determination of Eligibility Report, Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred, Sussex County, Delaware: S.R. 24 Planning Study (Love Creek to Route 1)* (Arnold *et al.* 2004); *Cultural Resources Survey, Delaware Route 1: Five Points to Rehoboth, Sussex County, Delaware* (Tidlow *et al.* 1990); and *Location Level Historic Resources Survey, Sussex East West Corridor Study, Sussex County, Delaware* (Tabachnick *et al.* 1992). Studies on Sussex County agriculture and roadside architecture were also consulted. A complete bibliography is provided in Section 7.0.

3.2 Exploration and Frontier Settlement (1630-1730±)

The Western Parkway project APE for historic architectural resources is located in the hinterlands of Lewes. During the Exploration and Frontier Settlement period, the area was caught in the dynastic struggles that suffused the region. The Dutch, the Swedes, and various English factions all vied for control of this part of the New World. To help advance its claims in the region, the Dutch in 1631 established a whaling community near present-day Lewes, which it named Zwaanendael, or "Valley of the Swans." It was abandoned by 1632. In 1659, the Dutch returned, erecting a small fort called Whorekill (also Hoerenkil, Horekil, Horekill, and Hoorekill) near the mouth of Delaware Bay at what is now Lewes. The purpose of the fort was to discourage English settlement in the region. The Lord Baltimore, who considered the lands of the Delmarva Peninsula part of his proprietorship, encouraged settlers from the Chesapeake Bay and Virginia to move to the area (De Cunzo and Catts 1990:30). By 1666, enough English settlements had been made on the Chesapeake Bay's Eastern Shore to establish Somerset County, Maryland, which included all land from the Virginia line to Delaware's Nanticoke River

(Moore 1959). The Dutch, too, settled families near Whorekill, including Dutch Mennonites, who established a colony called 'Sekonnessinck on Horekill' in 1663 (Weslager 1970). After the Dutch abandoned the fort and the English (through the authority of the Duke of York) gained political control of the region, Dutch settlers who swore allegiance to England were allowed to retain their lands and personal property. The English governor established the first local court at Whorekill in 1670. By 1671, Whorekill's population consisted of 47 individuals, both English and Dutch (Gehring 1977:100).

The Dutch would briefly gain control of Whorekill again in 1673; in response, Maryland's governor sent out an expeditionary force, which burned and pillaged the fort (deValinger 1950). After the English reestablished sovereignty, the Whorekill area remained in dispute between the Duke of York, Lord Baltimore, and William Penn, whose proprietorship of Pennsylvania began in 1681. Ultimately, Penn's claims would prevail. In 1682, the southernmost of Penn's lower three counties was renamed Sussex and the town of Whorekill became Lewes, named for the county seat of England's Sussex County. Lewes was the only town of any size, and it became the region's political, maritime, and commercial center. Sussex County was heavily forested and swampy, and settlement for much of the period was confined to an area within 10 to 12 miles of the coastline. In light of the poor condition of the roads, most settlers outside of Lewes proper lived along navigable streams (Hancock 1976:17-21). The majority were farmers raising tobacco (the primary means of exchange), corn, wheat, rye, hogs, and cattle. Rehoboth Hundred (later Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred) was erected in 1692 (Delaware Genealogical Society 1997). The county's population by 1700 was less than 1,000 persons (Munroe 1978:198).

Sussex County's African American population increased during the eighteenth century. Nearly all of it was enslaved, the increase attributed to an influx of slaves brought into the region by Maryland planters (Munroe 2001:57).

3.3 Intensified and Durable Occupation (1730-1770±)

Settlement increased in Sussex County during this period, as more emigrants entered the county. In 1728, the population was estimated as 1,750 residents, including 241 slaves and free blacks. By the 1740s, a maximum of 2,000 people called Sussex County home. By 1775, however, the population had ballooned to 14,000 inhabitants (Hancock 1976:20). The dramatic influx is attributed to a strong migration of settlers from Maryland's Eastern Shore, as well as overseas immigrations from Great Britain (Munroe 1978:150).

One of the first priorities of the new settlers was to clear the land for farming and to build houses for shelter. The county's abundant timber resources provided the necessary raw materials for houses and agricultural buildings; brick buildings were rare. Lewes continued to be the major community in the county, but crossroads villages began to appear as timber clearing and the development of arable lands farther from the coast spurred inland settlement (Catts *et al.* 1994:35, 49). To exploit the timber resources, settlers established water-powered sawmills, which generally were post-and-beam buildings supporting an up-and-down saw. Getting sufficient head to power the mills was problematic, however. Although streams abounded, the flat topography generally did not provide the necessary fall to power a waterwheel. Consequently, settlers had to dam existing ravines to create millponds for sawmills and gristmills (Moore 1959). Mill dams became convenient locations for roads to cross streams. For example, where the King's Highway between Lewes and Dover crossed a branch of the Broadkiln Creek is the approximate location of where Red Mill pond and mill are currently situated.

Agriculture remained the region's primary occupation during this period. As in the earlier period, farms and "plantations" (as the local inhabitants referred to their farms) were generally oriented to watercourses and had their own landings (Zebooker *et al.* 1996:I-13). Major landowners who held choice tracts of land occupied the highest rung on the social and economic ladder, while lesser landowners, foresters, and shippers were in the middle, and tenants, day laborers, and slaves had the least status (Herman 1992:66-67). Tobacco growing had depleted the soil and was largely phased out by 1775. Farmers now grew grains of all kinds, but the dominant crop was corn, produced both for consumption and as livestock feed. Most farms were subsistence operations run by poor farmers and farm laborers (Hancock 1976:28; Main 1973:26-32). Agricultural buildings from the period included frame barns, granaries, corncribs, and buildings to house livestock (Catts *et al.* 1994:51). Other important industries included shellfish fishing in the bays of the Delaware and the Atlantic, and shipbuilding (Harris *et al.* 2005:9).

In 1765, a century-long boundary dispute between Maryland and Pennsylvania was resolved in the latter's favor, and an area west of the Nanticoke River officially became part of Sussex County. As a result, Sussex County became the largest of the Lower Three Counties, and five new hundreds were created (Hancock 1976:25).

3.4 Early Industrialization (1770-1830±)

During the American Revolution, Lewes and the surrounding coastal areas bore the brunt of wartime activities, with British blockades and shore raids disrupting trade and commerce. Inland, strong loyalist sentiment prevailed, particularly among the poorer inhabitants of the county, who complained about the lack of paper currency and the destitution of their families. In 1780, about 400 Tories took part in the Black Camp Rebellion, which was ultimately quelled by the Kent County militia (Hancock 1976:43).

Following the war, settlers in the western part of Sussex County agitated for a more accessible county seat. Acceding to their demands, in 1791 the legislature voted to move the center of government from Lewes to more centrally located Georgetown. The move prompted improvements to the county's interior road network (Catts *et al.* 2003:13).

Despite the increase in total land, Sussex County's population continued to grow slowly. By 1790, the county's population stood at more than 24,000; by the close of the period it had reached 27,000. Lewes and Rehoboth was one of the less populated hundreds, containing only 1,514 people, or slightly less than eight percent of the whole. The population included African Americans, both free and enslaved. In 1830, 15.8 percent of Sussex County's African American population was enslaved, a much higher proportion of slaves to free blacks than in the rest of the state. However, free black and African American tenant communities did exist (Collins and Eby 1998:205; Herman *et al.* 1989:79).

Slavery had become an important institution in Sussex County during the Early Industrialization period, although the presence of anti-slavery Quaker leadership did result in social and political support for emancipation in the second half of the eighteenth century (Tidlow *et al.* 1990:13). When Delaware declared independence in 1776, its new constitution included a clause banning the importation of slaves from overseas. Ten years later, it banned exporting slaves from Delaware or outfitting slave ships in Delaware ports. The laws effectively barred slave auctions, although the institution of slavery persisted (Hoffecker 1977:93; Munroe 2001:57).

Agriculture remained the dominant occupation in Sussex County and Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred. To increase the amount of arable land, Ditch Acts were passed beginning in 1779 to reclaim low or swampy ground for agricultural use. Compared to the rest of Delaware, Sussex County farms were smaller (averaging less than 200 ac) and operated at subsistence level (Garrison 1988; Macintyre 1986; Michel 1985). Tenancy also increased during this time period (Herman *et al.* 1989:79). Sussex County agricultural homesteads were

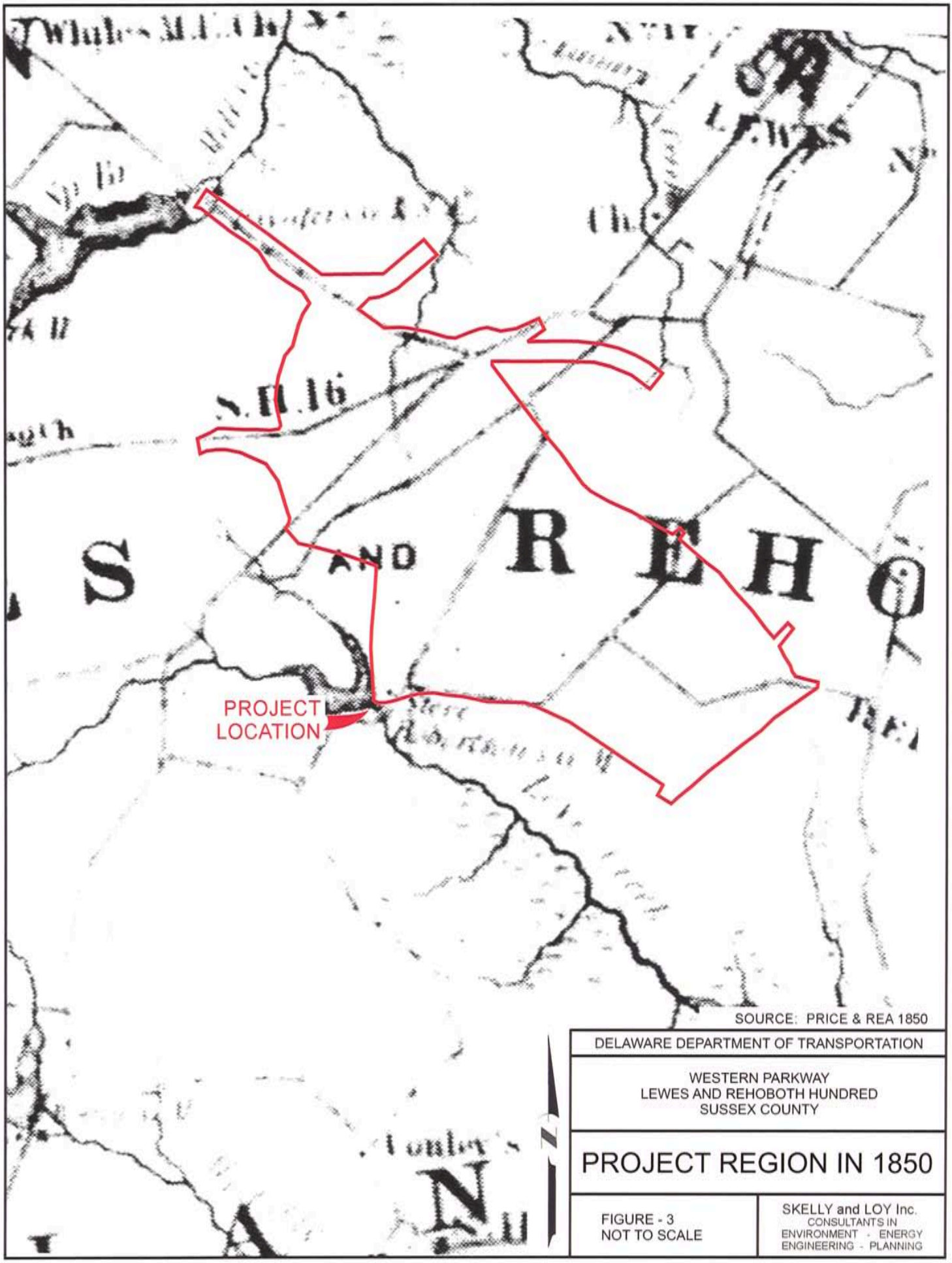
generally characterized by frame or log, one-and-one-half-story houses of less than 450 square feet, a small apple or peach orchard, livestock such as hogs, cows, sheep, and oxen, and a few outbuildings. The most common outbuildings were log corncribs (commonly called stacks) or small barns one-story in height, 15 or 16 feet by 20 feet, with a gable roof over a floored loft. Other buildings might be a smoke or meat house, and a kitchen (De Cunzo and Garcia 1993:22; Herman 1992:107, 192). On most plantations, only 50 percent of the total acreage was under cultivation (Hancock 1987:24-25).

To supplement their income, Sussex County's subsistence farmers were extensively engaged in home manufacturing. Tench Coxe, in his report on manufactures for the year 1810 (Coxe 1814:76), indicated that 70 percent of Delaware's looms were located in Sussex County. Over 62 percent of the total value of flaxen goods and more than 75 percent of wool produced in Delaware came from Sussex County homes. Other manufactories noted in Sussex County included gristmills, iron works, and distilleries.

3.5 Industrialization and Early Urbanization (1830-1880±)

At the beginning of the period, settlement patterns replicated those of the earlier periods. Lewes remained the dominant town, but many residents lived in non-nucleated houses on its outskirts (Herman *et al.* 1989:78). Settlement in the project region remained sparse (Figure 3) (Price and Rea 1850). The arrival of the railroad in Sussex County in the 1850s and 1860s altered settlement patterns and the economy of Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred. The north-south Delaware Railroad, completed to Delmar in 1859, connected Sussex County to urban communities such as Wilmington, Philadelphia, New York, Norfolk, and Washington, D.C., particularly after it became part of the mighty Pennsylvania Railroad system. In 1869, the Junction & Breakwater Railroad completed a line from the Delaware Railroad to Lewes; in 1878, it was extended to Rehoboth. The Queen Anne Railroad, completed in 1898, ran between the Chesapeake and Delaware bays; it was later known as the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia and the Delaware Coast Railroad (De Cunzo and Garcia 1993:24, 99; Eckman 1955:407; Hancock 1976:87-90; Herman *et al.* 1989:54; Lichtenstein Consulting Engineers, Inc. 2000:42).

The impacts of the railroad to Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred's economy, settlement patterns, and architecture were profound. Towns and villages developed around railroad depots, and settlement in the area increased (Figure 4). Nassau, for example, became a boomtown in the years following the Civil War, a shipping point for milk, fruit, and produce. Large apple orchards were also established in the area (Eckman 1955:494). Lewes and



SOURCE: PRICE & REA 1850

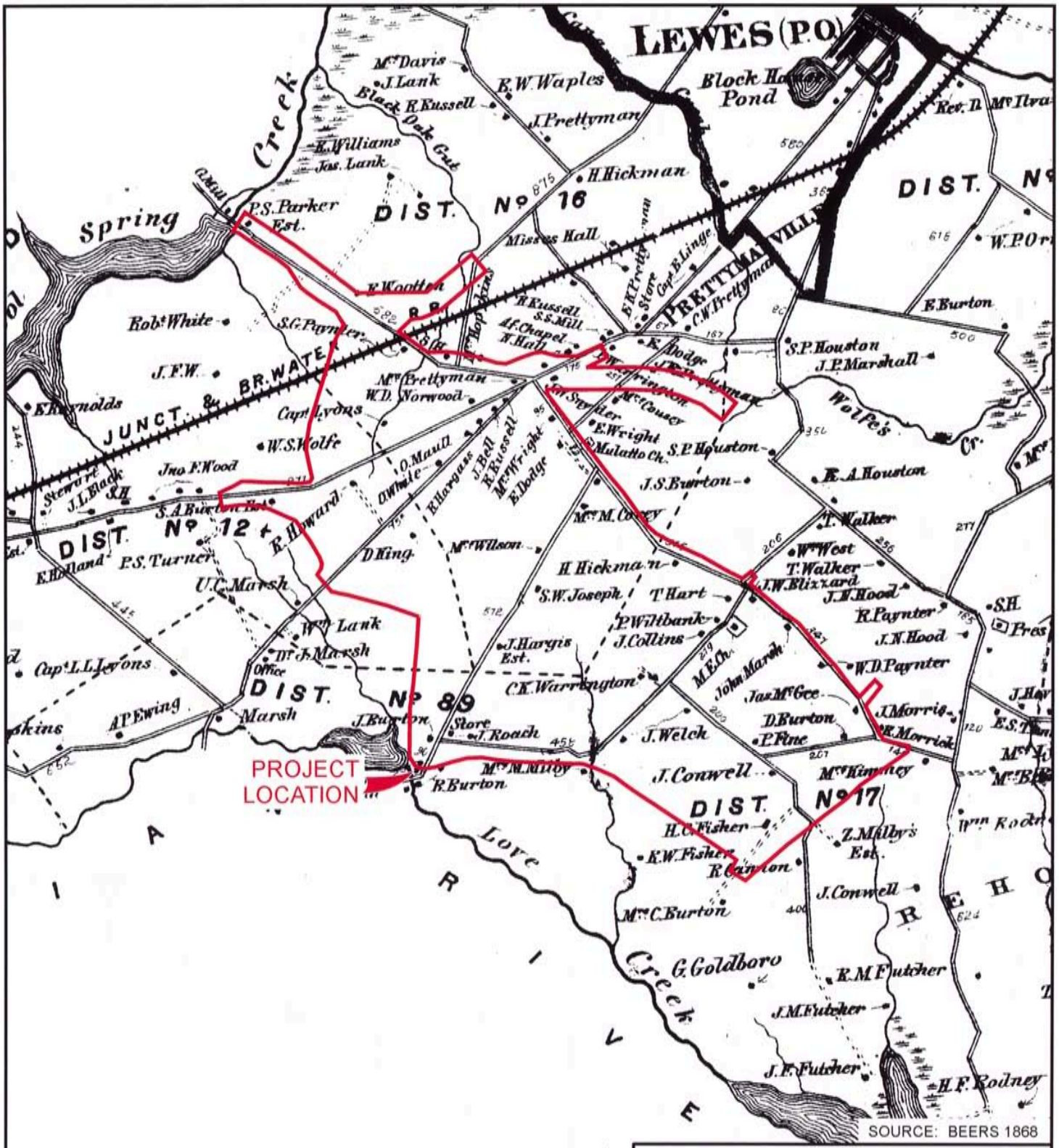
DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

WESTERN PARKWAY
LEWES AND REHOBOTH HUNDRED
SUSSEX COUNTY

PROJECT REGION IN 1850

FIGURE - 3
NOT TO SCALE

SKELLY and LOY Inc.
CONSULTANTS IN
ENVIRONMENT - ENERGY
ENGINEERING - PLANNING



DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

WESTERN PARKWAY
LEWES AND REHOBOTH HUNDRED
SUSSEX COUNTY

PROJECT REGION IN 1868

FIGURE - 4
NOT TO SCALE

SKELLY and LOY Inc.
CONSULTANTS IN
ENVIRONMENT - ENERGY
ENGINEERING - PLANNING

Rehoboth Beach became much more accessible to urban dwellers, and tourism became a force in the area's economy (Hancock 1976:90).

Agriculturally, corn remained the dominant cash crop. However, perishable fruits and vegetables, which could now be quickly transported to urban markets *via* rail, began taking up a larger percentage of crop land. By the end of this period, Sussex County was the state's largest peach producing region. Blackberries, strawberries, melons, and tomatoes were also popular crops. Fruit and vegetable production, in turn, spurred the establishment of canneries, particularly at rail heads and in Lewes (De Cunzo and Garcia 1993:87-88; Hancock 1976:88; Scharf 1888:1241).

The continued emphasis on agriculture and the shift in crop types produced a reworking of the Sussex County farm. The amount of arable land reached its apex, as previously marginal ground was cleared to take advantage of the new agricultural opportunities (Bauman 1941). A more permanent Agricultural Complex developed, composed of a farmstead with one or more dwellings, along with yards, gardens, fences, ditches, and other domestic and agricultural outbuildings (De Cunzo and Garcia 1993:234-235). Farmhouses from this period were generally vernacular I-house dwellings two-and-one-half-stories high, one or two rooms deep, three to five bays wide, with a side gable roof and a center hall plan. They frequently featured front and side porches and rearward ell extensions. The latter often incorporated functions that formerly had been in separate buildings, such as kitchens or servants' quarters (Herman 1987:148). In rural areas like Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred, many retained Greek Revival, Italianate, and Gothic Revival influences long past their popularity in urban centers (Arnold *et al.* 2004:19; McAlester and McAlester 2002:89, 96, 178, 210). Outbuildings might include corncribs, small barns, sheds, granaries, summer kitchens, hay poles, and root houses. Tenant houses and labor camps were not uncommon, particularly as market crops played a greater role in Sussex County agriculture (Herman *et al.* 1989:54). Farms also include agricultural fields, wood lots, marshes, and orchards (De Cunzo and Garcia 1993:235).

Despite the changes wrought by the railroad, certain economic patterns continued. Home manufacturing continued to be a major source of income for Sussex County farmers. Crafts practiced included smithing, carpentry, fishing, lumber and grist milling, tanning, hunting, and trapping (Garrison 1988; Michel 1985:10-12). Craft-based industries such as blacksmith shops, boot and shoe manufacturing, leather working, agricultural implement construction and repair, and wagon and carriage shops also remained in evidence. Other industry was limited. In 1860, the county recorded 37 gristmills, 56 lumber mills, and six shipyards (Hancock 1976:67).

The diversifying economy provided greater employment opportunities and options for area residents, who could work as farm laborers and tenant farmers, or as day laborers in the canneries or the industries of Lewes. These opportunities extended, to a lesser extent, to Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred's African American population, which included sizeable populations of both enslaved and free residents. At the start of the Civil War, Sussex County was the largest slaveholding area in Delaware, with more than half the state's total slave population (Hoffecker 1977:93-94). The vast majority were owned by small farmers, and they worked as domestic servants and field laborers. Free black males in Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred worked as day laborers and hired farm hands; a few owned farms, worked as skilled artisans such as wheelwrights and blacksmiths, or went to sea. Free black women found employment as domestics, farm laborers, or as washerwomen (U.S. Census 1850, 1860b).

Enslaved African Americans were freed following the Civil War; one factor that made the change palatable to whites was the economic realization that hiring seasonal farmhands was cheaper than maintaining a workforce of slaves year round (Hoffecker 1977:93-94). Although no longer enslaved, the end of the Civil War did little to improve the social or economic status of Sussex County's or Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred's African Americans. Black men and black women in Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred found employment in the same types of jobs that free blacks had held prior to the war; they also worked as waiters in the hundred's growing resort industry or as tenant farmers/sharecroppers (U.S. Census 1870b, 1880b). Overall, blacks formed the majority of Sussex County's domestic workers, craftspeople, mechanics, and laborers in the 25 years following the Civil War (Holland and Gaines 1956:3, 60). They were denied voting rights and the opportunity for education, were not permitted to own firearms, and had their freedom severely circumscribed by Jim Crow laws (Hancock 1976:65). To prevent blacks from voting, court officials "discouraged" blacks from paying taxes or legally recording property ownership (Tidlow *et al.* 1990:16, 102).

Despite these restrictions, African American communities were established in the project region. The communities generally coalesced around schools and churches (Skelcher 1995). Such was the case with the village of Belltown, founded in the 1840s by Jacob "Jigger" Bell, a free black clergyman (U.S. Census 1850:63). The village, located at Five Points, is shown as a scattering of houses on the 1868 map of Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred (Beers 1868). However, there are indications in census records that it may be somewhat larger than it is portrayed (U.S. Census 1850, 1860b). The village included a church, the John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church. According to a datestone on the building, it was originally built on a donated lot and rebuilt in 1872 and 1941. Belltown was determined eligible for listing in the

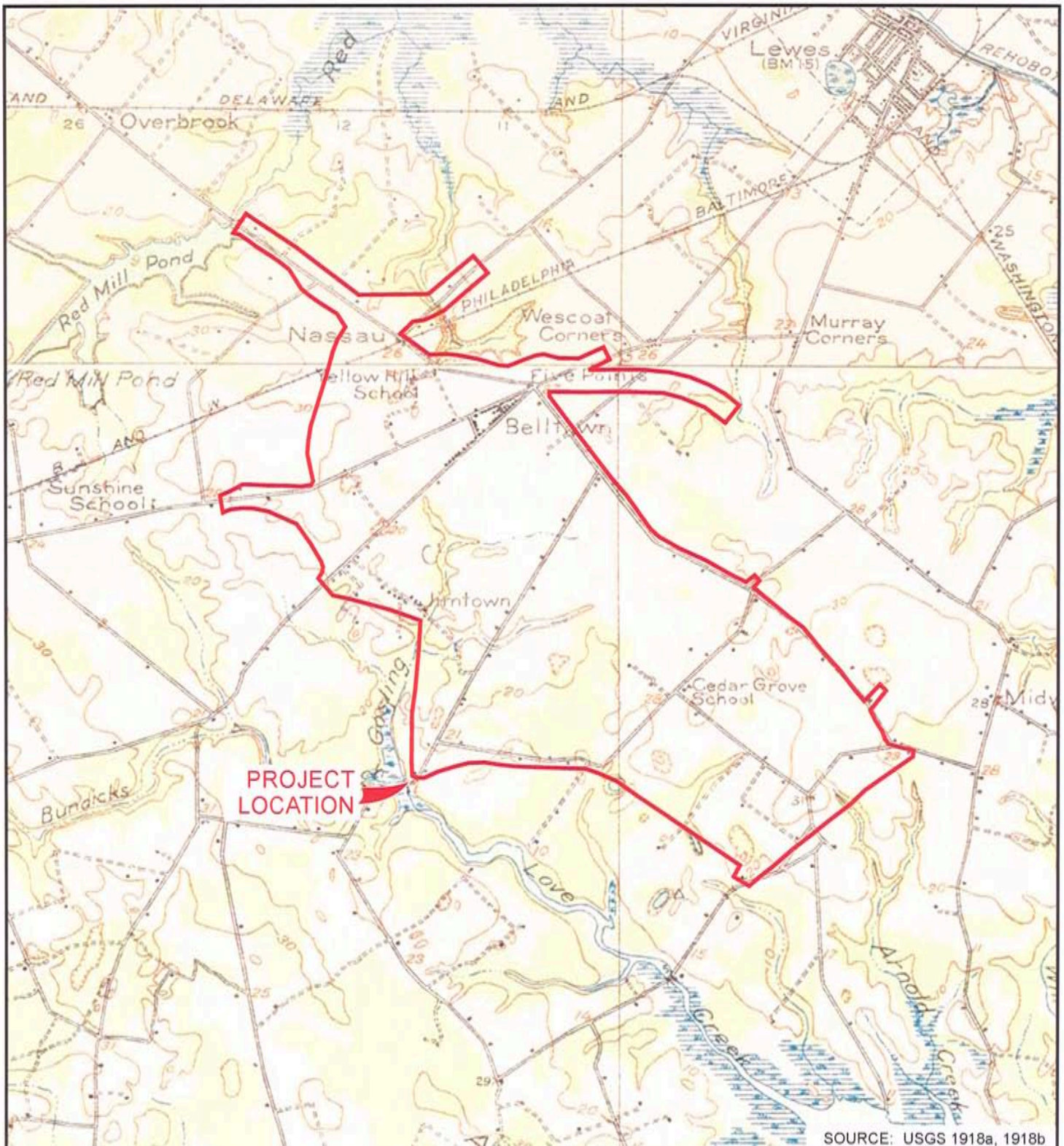
NRHP in the late 1980s. A second African American church, the Israel United Methodist Church, was located a short distance to Belltown's southeast on what is today Plantations Road. Originally constructed *ca.* 1840 (Johnson, personal communication 2006), the church was primarily attended by the area's lighter-skinned African Americans. It is designated on the 1868 map of the hundred (Beers 1868) as a "Mulatto Church," a term used in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to indicate people of mixed African American and white or Native American race.

To Belltown's southeast is a second African American community, Jimtown, located between S.R. 23 (Beaverdam Road) and Robbinsonville Road (C.R. 277). Jimtown's origins are more difficult to pin down. It does not appear on the 1868 Delaware atlas (Beers 1868). Deed references seem to indicate that the community began to form in the mid-1870s (Sussex County Deeds 1875:332), but that it did not coalesce until the late nineteenth century.

3.6 Urbanization and Early Suburbanization (1880-1940±)

Conservative attitudes and agricultural practices persisted well into the twentieth century in southeastern Delaware, as locals kept one foot "firmly planted in the eighteenth century" (Williams 1999:95). At the beginning of the period, corn remained the dominant cash crop, although truck farming continued to grow. By the 1890s, Sussex County became the peach growing center of the state, until peach blight decimated the crop (Doerrfield *et al.* 1993:11). At the beginning of the twentieth century, Sussex County had also become the leading producer of strawberries in the nation, growing more than seven million quarts. The boom ended in the post-World War II era, the victim of war-related labor shortages and high post-war labor prices (Hancock 1976:89; Passmore *et al.* 1978:73). Other important crops in eastern Sussex County in the early twentieth century included cannery crops such as tomatoes, lima beans, and string beans, as well as potatoes and a small amount of wheat. A primary use of the Lewes and Rehoboth Canal, completed in 1913, was to ship tomatoes *via* barges from landings on Rehoboth Bay and Indian River to Rehoboth canneries (Eckman 1955; Passmore *et al.* 1978:80).

The village of Nassau was a shipment center for produce from the area during this period (Figure 5) (USGS 1918a, 1918b). The village sat astride the right-of-way of the Junction & Breakwater Railroad, which by the early twentieth century was a subsidiary of the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) (Lichtenstein Consulting Engineers, Inc. 2000:42). In 1919, the PRR established Nassau Orchards, Inc. to transship produce from southeastern Delaware. All



SOURCE: USGS 1918a, 1918b

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

WESTERN PARKWAY
LEWES AND REHOBOTH HUNDRED
SUSSEX COUNTY

PROJECT REGION IN 1918

FIGURE - 5
NOT TO SCALE

SKELLY and LOY Inc.
CONSULTANTS IN
ENVIRONMENT - ENERGY
ENGINEERING - PLANNING

shares of the corporation were owned by the officers of the PRR. The company established a packing house and headquarters building at the siding near the railroad's Nassau Freight House, which provided employment for area residents, including residents of Belltown and Jimtown. The Pennsylvania Railroad retained control of the company until the early 1960s (Knapp, personal communication 2006).

Produce was not the only cash crop produced in Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred. Many Sussex County farmers supplemented their incomes during the months of November and December by making holiday holly wreaths. The industry flourished from the 1880s until the 1960s, and was especially significant during the Great Depression (Eckman 1955:385; Hancock 1976:102). In the 1920s, Delmarva's famous commercial broiler industry took off, adding chickens to the list of Sussex County's agricultural products. With raising chickens assuming greater magnitude, corn, along with soybeans, took on added importance as chicken feed (De Cunzo and Garcia 1993:123; Hancock 1976:100-103). The broiler industry helped replace the waning maritime industry in Lewes and Rehoboth Beach (Lanier and Herman 1992:238-239).

A number of factors account for the growth of truck farming and broiler production during this period. Delaware was within a day's transport of a string of east coast cities and towns, which provided ready markets; its soils were porous and well-drained, ideally suited for the cultivation of fruits and vegetables and the raising of chickens; and its climate was mild and semi-marine, due to the regulating effect of the Atlantic Ocean (Doerrfield *et al.* 1993:11; Tomhave 1951:131). Transportation improvements also helped. The completion of the innovative Dupont Highway from one end of the state to the other between 1903 and 1924 provided farmers with a first-class automobile trunk route to compliment the Delaware Railroad. The formation of the Delaware State Highway Department (SHD) in 1917, combined with dramatically increased state assistance for county roads in 1919 and the SHD's emphasis on consolidating and improving the primary and secondary road systems between 1926 and 1935, ensured that farmers would have good roads to move products to market (Lichtenstein Consulting Engineers, Inc. 2000:12-14). The improved road system also stimulated the continued growth of tourism along the beaches of Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred (Hancock 1976:103).

Sussex County's agricultural production and revenues increased despite a reduction in average farm size from 123 acres in 1880 to 78 acres in 1930 and a 15.3 percent decrease in the number of farms (Bauman 1941:4, 7). Some crops, like broilers, needed less land, and many farmers took advantage of agricultural and technological improvements to increase revenues (Lanier and Herman 1992:7). Tenant farming also increased during this period, with

more than 50 percent of Delaware's farmers being tenants or sharecroppers by 1900 (De Cunzo and Garcia 1993:31). Farmers used the increased revenue to construct new family farmhouses and agricultural outbuildings, alter existing homes, or move older housing stock to their properties as tenant residences.

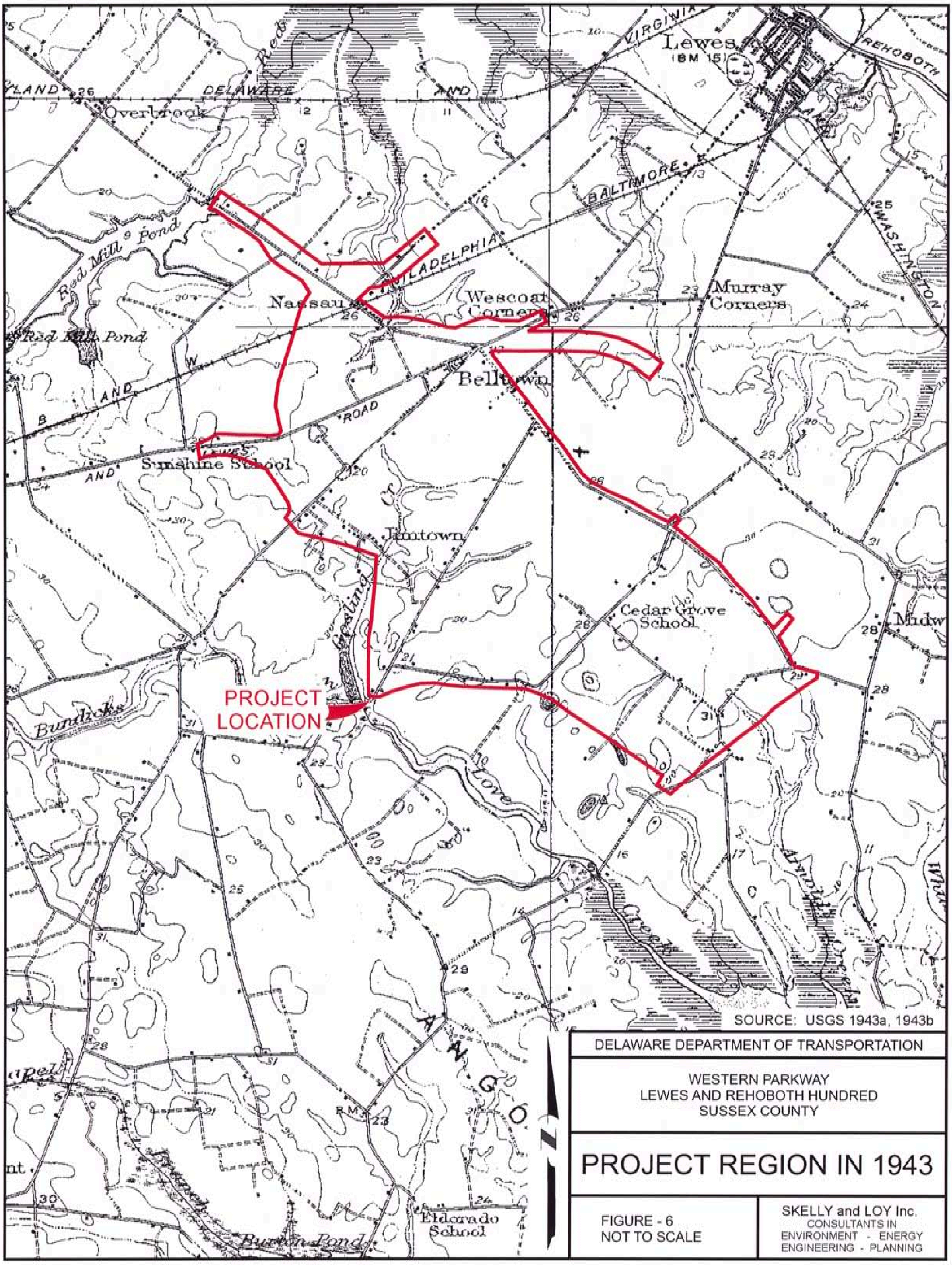
Existing I-houses were often remodeled to accept new porches, to bring kitchens inside the main house, or to expand living areas. Newly constructed farmhouses from this era include Colonial Revival, American Foursquare, and Bunaglows, or vernacular dwellings with elements of those styles. Outbuildings include new barns, chicken houses, frame corncribs, and concrete block milkhouses (Arnold *et al.* 2004:25-27).

As illustrated in Figures 5 and 6, the APE remained primarily rural and agricultural during this period (USGS 1918a, 1918b, 1943a, 1943b). In addition to farming, the lumber industry remained important in Sussex County. The main product was virgin Sussex pine that had grown following the initial cuttings that occurred after the arrival of the railroads (Passmore *et al.* 1978:13-14). Lewes remained the largest town, but other villages existed within or near the APE, including Prettymanville, Belltown, and Nassau (USGS 1918a, 1918b, 1943a, 1943b).

Sussex County's blacks continued to own or rent farms or work as farm laborers, day laborers, fruit pickers, in seafood- and produce-processing plants, as domestics or laundry women, and in the resorts of Rehoboth. Blacks supplemented their earnings by raising and selling produce, pigs, and chickens. Reportedly, Belltown residents also found a measure of prosperity in the moonshine trade during Prohibition (Tidlow *et al.* 1990:103).

Much of Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred's African American population lived in the communities of Belltown and Jimtown. Belltown grew substantially during the period, as shown on Figure 5 (USGS 1918a, 1918b). It now contained a segregated school, the Nassau Schoolhouse, constructed *ca.* 1930 across the road from the John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church.

Jimtown grew markedly during the Urbanization and Early Suburbanization period. Census records confirm that the community was firmly established by at least 1900 (U.S. Census 1900:15-17). It is shown on both sides of Jimtown Road on the 1918 USGS map of the area (see Figure 5). According to local residents, the community was named for James Daniel Hargus, who was born *ca.* 1870 (Forney 1989; U.S. Census 1880b:60, 1920:19).



SOURCE: USGS 1943a, 1943b

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

WESTERN PARKWAY
LEWES AND REHOBOTH HUNDRED
SUSSEX COUNTY

PROJECT REGION IN 1943

FIGURE - 6
NOT TO SCALE

SKELLY and LOY Inc.
CONSULTANTS IN
ENVIRONMENT - ENERGY
ENGINEERING - PLANNING

3.7 Suburbanization and Early Ex-urbanization (1940-1962±)

The APE remained predominantly rural into the early 1960s, the cut-off date for the historic architectural resource survey. Agriculture, fruit packing and processing, and seafood processing remained the area's dominant employers and provided employment for the area's residents, including its African American population (Odelia Duffie, personal communication 2006; Braven Duffie, personal communication 2006). During this period, a good deal of the agricultural land in and just outside of the APE seemed to become consolidated in the hands of a small number of property owners, such as Charlie Mills, J.G. Townsend, and the Knapp family (Clark *et al.* 2005:17-18; Odelia Duffie, personal communication 2006; Knapp, personal communication 2006; Sussex County Deeds 1938).

An exception to the continued agricultural pattern of the area was along what is now U.S. Route 1, the major north-south road through the area and the major feeder route to the Delaware beaches. The opening of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge in 1954 dramatically cut travel time to Rehoboth and Delaware's other beaches, making the area much more accessible to vacationers from Baltimore and Washington, D.C. The ensuing heavy traffic volume made U.S. Route 1 an ideal location for commercial establishments relating to the tourism and automobile industries (Clark *et al.* 2005:14-15). Examples of commercial roadside architecture include motels, service stations and auto parts stores, automobile showrooms, and eating establishments. Development has continued and intensified to the present day along U.S. Route 1, and much of the post-World War II commercial roadside architecture has been replaced by big-box retailers and fast-food and other restaurant franchises. Scattered earlier examples remain, their existence threatened by further development.

In addition to commercial roadside architecture, there are also residences from the Suburbanization and Early Ex-urbanization period found along U.S. Route 1 and elsewhere within the APE. Most are small, modest, one- or one-and-one-half-story frame residences constructed between 1945 and 1962, the cut-off date for this survey. The houses are generally classified in three broad categories, including Cape Cods, Minimal Traditional, and Ranch.

Cape Cod-style dwellings became popular in the early twentieth century. The style is based on seventeenth and eighteenth century New England antecedents. The massing of typical Cape Cod-style houses consists of one-and-one-half-stories in height and three bays in width. The main entry is usually located in the center of the facade to create the suggestion of bilateral symmetry. Typically, gable roof dormers pierce the plane of the building's gable roof. Minimal Traditional houses made little attempt to carefully copy Neoclassical or Colonial

prototypes. Rather, they borrowed bits from a wide variety of early styles, but freely and minimally adapted them to contemporary forms and material (McAlester and McAlester 2002:475). Ranch-style houses gained popularity beginning in the 1940s and dominated American domestic building through the 1960s (McAlester and McAlester 2002:477-479). Typically, Ranch-style houses appear on building lots as one-story buildings with a rectangular plan and a low pitched roof silhouette, with either a hipped or gable type roof. Depending on the location of the extension or addition, Ranch house plans vary from L-shaped to T-shaped plans. Large picture windows and sliding glass doors leading out to patios characterize the type.

Surprisingly, the project APE is virtually devoid of the planned subdivisions that were such a housing archetype of the post-World War II period (Clark 1986:201). A few houses were built in the Dutch Acres subdivision, which is located just outside of the APE northeast of St. Jude the Apostle Roman Catholic Church on the east side of U.S. Route 1. But the subdivision was not completed by 1962, the cut-off date used for the current Phase I Historic Architectural Resource Survey. The remaining subdivisions within the project APE date from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.